

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated July 6, 2010 in which claims 1, 5, 7, 9-11, 14, 15, 17-20 and 22 were pending and were rejected. In view of the following, reconsideration and allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

Request for Interview

Should the amendments and arguments submitted herewith not place the application in condition for allowance, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner contact the undersigned for an interview.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §101

Claims 19, 20 and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §101 as allegedly not falling under one of the four statutory categories of invention. Herewith, independent claim 19 has been cancelled, rendering the rejection of that claim moot. Further, dependent claims 20 and 22 have been amended to depend from new independent claim 26, which Applicant submits is directed to statutory subject matter. Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §101 is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1, 5, 7, 11, 14 and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Alpdemir (US PAP 2002/0035474, hereinafter Alpdemir) in view of Albayrak et al. (US Patent No. 6,662,163, hereinafter Albayrak), and in further view of Bangalore et al. (US PAP 2005/0135571, hereinafter Bangalore). Claims 9, 10, 15, 17, 18 and 20-22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Alpdemir in view of Albayrak and Bangalore, and in further view of Takebayashi et al. (US Patent No. 5,357,596, hereinafter Takebayashi). Of these, claims 1 and 11 are in independent form. As mentioned above, independent claim 19 has been cancelled, rendering the rejection of that claim moot.

Features described in the present Specification relate to focus tracking in a dialog. In one embodiment described at paragraph [0221], aspects include automatically adapting a dialogue flow so that it stays focused on the user's most recent input. Applicant respectfully invites the Examiner to review paragraphs [0238]-[0240] of the present Specification which provide an example of how a focusing mechanism retains order or focus in a travel dialogue, in one embodiment. In particular, paragraphs [0238]-[0240] state:

[0238] The following provides an example of how the focussing mechanism retains order or focus in a mixed-initiative travel dialogue requiring a departure city and a destination city. Suppose the question or prompt is rendered "What are your travel plans?". A user may answer "I'd like to go to Seattle." or "I'd like to leave from Paris". In the first case, the dialogue should go on with the confirmation: "Did you say Seattle?" and then ask for the departure city since this information was not given.

[0239] In the second case, the system should confirm the departure city first and then ask about the destination city second. If the user provided both the departure city and the destination city, the application author may want to confirm the departure city first and then the arrival city. Writing such a dialogue flow without using automated focusing is time consuming and error prone. Using the focusing mechanism, the application author does not have to worry about getting the ordering right. (However, the application author will still need to worry about some of the ordering (e.g., which city to confirm when both are given at the same time) although not as much as before.) If the user provides the departure city, the associated SemanticItem is pushed on the stack. When the control algorithm RunSpeech looks for a suitable QA control to execute, only QA controls related to that SemanticItem will be considered. In this case the QA confirming the departure city will be executed, even if the QA asking for the destination city comes earlier in speech index order.

[0240] The focusing problem becomes quickly intractable if three or more pieces of information can be provided. In the example above, assume the airline to be used is also desired besides the departure and destination cities. A user may provide input to the initial question of travel plans by stating, "On United Airlines, I want to depart from Seattle", or "I want to fly to Minneapolis on American Airlines", or "I want to fly from Seattle to Chicago." Each of these examples provides a different set of information. Trying to predict all possible dialogue flows and making sure that the system appropriately confirms (and asks again in case the user denies that the recognition result is correct) and asks for remaining required information in a logical manner is a very difficult task. However, this becomes straightforward using the focusing mechanism.

The cited Alpdemir reference does not provide for focusing in a dialog as described in Applicant's Specification and recited in the context of Applicant's claims. Instead, Alpdemir teaches proceeding with a script for a consumer or business call (see e.g., paragraphs [0253]-[0343]) by providing prompts for questions and receiving answers in an order of the script. While the user may have options for proceeding (i.e., "Choice 1: Domino. Choice 2: Straw hat"), the subsequent prompts follow the script order for the given answer. In other words, the script has an established order for the prompts that defines how the system will proceed for each possible answer. Assuming, arguendo, that a user response in Alpdemir includes information

that is not an answer to a prompt (which Applicant does not concede), Aldepimer does not teach or suggest focusing to provide a prompt for the information.

In contrast, using a focusing mechanism situations can be accounted for where the user provides an answer to a prompt as well as other information that is not an answer to the prompt (e.g., where the system asks for a departure city and user provides an answer for the departure city and other information such as an arrival city, a departure time, an airline, etc. (see e.g., paragraphs [0237]-[0240])). As described in further detail below, Alpdemir does not teach or suggest receiving a response to a prompt that includes an answer to the prompt and additional information that is not an answer to the prompt. More importantly, Alpdemir is clearly void of any teaching or suggestion of how additional information could be handled.

Independent claim 1 recites, among other features, “wherein the client side markup is adapted to prioritize prompting of the plurality of questions and generate audible prompts for the plurality of questions in a selected order as related to an order of the controls”, “the dialog follows the selected order of prompting to provide audible prompts to the user for one or more of a plurality of questions and receive one or more responses to the audible prompts from the user”, “wherein the dialog departs from the selected order to provide an additional prompt when a response provided by the user to a previous audible prompt that was given in the selected order includes both an answer to the previous audible prompt and additional information that is not an answer to the previous audible prompt that was given”, and “wherein the additional prompt is provided to the user concerning the additional information before the dialog returns to the selected order.” These features are neither taught nor suggested by the cited references, taken alone or in combination.

Pages 3-4 of the “Response to Arguments” section of the Office Action cite several portions of Alpdemir as allegedly disclosing departing from a selected order of prompting and generating audible prompts. For instance, page 3, first paragraph of the Office Action alleges:

Alpdemir teaches a call flow example, where both the content and ordering of the content may change to suit local or region speech patterns, the goals of the call service, the demographics of the caller to the extent they can be determined, and numerous other objective and subjective or cultural factors ([0251]).

Further, page 3, paragraph 2 of the Office Action states:

procedures described for existing registered users as well as for new business users may be modified to provide somewhat different options at each stage of the interaction or to provide different ordering of the options ([0221]).

These sections mention that the script can be different based on characteristics of the user, and do not relate to departing from a selected order of prompting based on or as a function of responses from the user.

Further, the examples of Alpdemir mentioned on pages 6-10 of the Office Action also do not teach or suggest following a selected order of prompting and departing from the selected order as recited in claim 1. To illustrate, the “First Exemplar Script for Consumer Call” cited in the Office Action and beginning on paragraph [0253] of Alpdemir does not disclose that a response from a user includes an answer to a prompt that was given and additional information that is not an answer to the prompt. At paragraph [0256], Alpdemir asks the user for the name of a business. At paragraph [0257], the name of a business is provided. This does not contain an answer and additional information. At paragraph [0258], Alpdemir asks the user to say “connect” (to have the system dial the number) or “more”. Again, the answer provided at paragraph [0259] does not include an answer and additional information that is not an answer to the prompt.

From paragraphs [0260]-[0343], every response in Alpdemir only includes an answer to the prompt. Nowhere does the user provide a response that includes both an answer and additional information. For example, at paragraph [0275] the user provides a credit card number and the expiration date, in response to a question asking for the credit card number and the expiration date. This response does not include additional information as claimed. More importantly, nowhere does Alpdemir teach or suggest how additional information in a response would or could be handled, let alone providing an additional prompt for additional information as claimed.

For at least the above reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 1 is neither taught, suggested, nor rendered obvious by the cited references, and is in allowable form.

With respect to independent claim 11, Applicant respectfully submits that the cited references at least do not teach or suggest, either separately or in combination, “following the

selected order to generate one or more audible prompts for one or more questions”, “receiving a user response to one of the audible prompts that includes an answer to a question associated with the audible prompt and additional information provided in the user response with the answer, the additional information not being an answer to the question”, and “before proceeding with a next question that follows the question in the selected order, departing from the selected order of the questions.” Applicant also respectfully submits that the cited references do not teach or suggest “storing values for the answer and the additional information in the semantic map”, “maintaining, in a stack, a reference to the one or more semantic items in the semantic map associated with the additional information”, and “identifying the one or more semantic items associated with the additional information and generating an additional audible prompt that is related to the additional information.”

For at least these reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 11 is neither taught, suggested, nor rendered obvious by the cited references and is in allowable form.

Further, Applicant submits that related dependent claims 5, 7, 9, 10, 14, 15 and 18 are also in allowable form at least based on their relation to independent claims 1 and 11, discussed above.

#### New Claims

With regard to new independent claim 26, Applicant respectfully submits that the cited references at least do not teach or suggest, either separately or in combination, a server module which generates client side markup adapted to prioritize prompting of a plurality of questions and generate audible prompts for the plurality of questions in a selected order as related to an order of a set of controls, and the client side markup being configured to create a dialog with the user wherein the dialog departs from the selected order to provide an additional prompt when a response provided by the user to a previous audible prompt that was given in the selected order includes both an answer to the previous audible prompt and additional information that is not an answer to the previous audible prompt. For at least these reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 26 is in allowable form.

Further, Applicant submits that dependent claims 20, 22-25, and 27-31 are also in allowable form at least based on their relation to independent claims 11 and 26.

Conclusion

The foregoing remarks are intended to assist the Office in examining the application and in the course of explanation may employ shortened or more specific or variant descriptions of some of the claim language. Such descriptions are not intended to limit the scope of the claims; the actual claim language should be considered in each case. Furthermore, the remarks are not to be considered exhaustive of the facets of the invention which are rendered patentable, being only example of certain advantageous features and differences, which Applicant's Attorney chooses to mention at this time. For the foregoing reasons, Applicant reserves the right to submit additional evidence showing the distinction between Applicant's invention to be unobvious in view of the prior art.

Furthermore, in commenting on the references and in order to facilitate a better understanding of the differences that are expressed in the claims, certain details of distinction between the same and the present invention have been mentioned, even though such differences do not appear in all of the claims. It is not intended by mentioning any such unclaimed distinctions to create any implied limitations in the claims.

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that all pending claims are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

The Director is authorized to charge any fee deficiency required by this paper or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 23-1123.

Respectfully submitted,

MICROSOFT CORPORATION

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